

REMARKS

In the Office Action mailed December 23, 2009, the Examiner allowed claims 37, and 39-41; objected claims 6-7, 9, 11, 36, and 53; rejected claims 17-19 and 45-47 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over the instant disclosure and U.S. Patent No. 6,711,147 to Barnes et al. (Barnes); and indicated that claims 6-7, 9, 11, 36, and 53 would be allowed if corrected as proposed by the Examiner.

By this amendment, Applicants amend claims 6, 7, 9, 11, 36, and 53 as suggested by the Examiner. Applicants also amend claims 18, 19, 36, 46 and 47 to improve form. To advance prosecution to an immediate allowance, Applicants cancel claims 17 and 45, without prejudice or disclaimer.

Claims 6, 7, 9-11, 18-19, 36, 37, 39-41, 46, 47, and 53 are currently pending.

To expedite prosecution, Applicants submit that independent claims 6, 7, 9, 11, 36, 37, 39, 41, and 53 as well as dependent claims 10, 18, 19, 46, and 47, at least by reason of their dependency from an allowable independent claim, ***are in immediate condition for allowance*** for at least the reason that pending independent claims have been amended to address the Examiner's objections.

Applicants disagree with the Examiner's remarks on page 7 of the Office Action and submit that the Examiner has mischaracterized the instant specification. Nonetheless, Applicants have canceled claims 17 and 45 to advance prosecution and to obtain an immediate allowance of pending claims 6, 7, 9-11, 18, 19, 36, 37, 39-41, 46, 47, and 53.

Cancellation of claims 17 and 45 and the instant amendment obviate the basis of rejection under 35 U.S.C. §103(a).

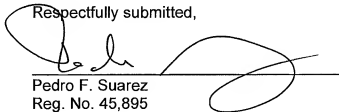
Thus, claims 6, 7, 9-11, 18, 19, 36, 37, 39-41, 46, 47, and 53 are in immediate condition for allowance.

CONCLUSION

On the basis of the foregoing amendments, the pending claims are in condition for allowance. It is believed that all of the pending claims have been addressed in this paper. However, failure to address a specific rejection, issue or comment, does not signify agreement with or concession of that rejection, issue or comment. In addition, because the arguments made above are not intended to be exhaustive, there may be reasons for patentability of any or all pending claims (or other claims) that have not been expressed. Finally, nothing in this paper should be construed as an intent to concede any issue with regard to any claim, except as specifically stated in this paper.

Applicant is concurrently filing herewith a Petition for a one-month extension of time with the requisite fee. Authorization for a credit-card payment of the filing fees mentioned above is submitted herewith. No additional fees are believed to be due, however the Commissioner is authorized to charge any additional fees or credit overpayments to Deposit Account No. 50-0311, reference No. 39700-796001US/NC40107US. If there are any questions regarding this reply, the Examiner is encouraged to contact the undersigned at the telephone number provided below.

Respectfully submitted,



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